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FOUR SQUARE & FOX
HUNTING by Thomas

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BY
R. S. THOMAS

FEBRUARY 6, 1905.

FOUR SQUARE ^{AND} FOX HUNTING.

My Friends—the Sons and Grandsons

and friends of those of former days :

On an occasion so unique as this—that is without a parallel in the history of the State so far as I know—I hope it will not be deemed inappropriate if I give some history of Four Square and its owners; and say a word about fox-hunting, one of the diversions of those owners.

On the 1st day of February, 1664, Anthony Mathews, for the importation of thirteen persons, obtained a patent for 640 acres of land lying and being in the County of Isle of Wight, beginning at a marked Old Oak, near the head of Carnegie's Swamp, or the West side of Edmund Palmer's land; thence West by North 320 poles; thence South by West 320 poles; thence East by South 320 poles; thence North by East along Palmer's line of marked trees to the first station or marked old tree.

As there are 320 poles in a mile, and as there are 640 acres in a square mile, the above tract of land acquired and has ever since retained the name of Four Square.

The name is an ancient one. All readers of the Bible will, perhaps, recall the description of the court by Ezekiel (xl-47) which he describes as "an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, four square", and John's description of the holy city "which lieth four square and the length thereof is as great as the breadth" (Rev. xxi-16).

It runs all through English song and story, and those familiar with its literature, will, perhaps, recall many recurrences of these expressive words. The heart of every Confederate soldier beats with quicken pulse, when he thinks of the match-

HERBERT T. EZEKIEL,

PRINTER,

Richmond, Va.

less commander of the army of Northern Virginia whose

"Good gray head all men knew,
That iron nerve to true occasion, true,
That tower of strength
That stood Four Square to all the winds that blew."

This particular Four Square tract of land above spoken of, was devised by Anthony Mathews to James Baron by will, bearing date on the 6th of May, 1681, and James Baron sold and conveyed it to Andrew Woodley, by deed bearing date on the 23rd day of February, 1693, in the exact language of the patent to Anthony Mathews (Deed Book—page—).

This Andrew Woodley came to this County as early, probably, as 1690; for on the 14th day of September, 1691, he bought of Edward Cobb and Dorothy, his wife, two hundred acres of land in Little Neck, called Jones' (Deed Book 1, p. 42).

He liked the County and determined to settle in it. Accordingly, we find an order of the Court on the 9th of March, 1693, which says "These may notify that there is due to Mr. Andrew Woodley six hundred acres of land for the importation of himself four tynes; his wife and two sons, namely Henry and Thomas, and four negroes namely Cowberry, Isabella, Maria and Jennie, into this county, being legally proved in this Court".

He had two children who were born after this period, John who married Frances Wilson, and Mary who married Joseph Copeland.

The six hundred acres of land spoken of in the order of the Court of March 9th, 1693, were probably located at the junction of the Black Water and Notoway Rivers where he had land on the Black Water and Notoway Rivers by patents, or near Little Neck. Little Neck was then, as it is now, very rich and admirably located. It is separated from the old Courthouse only by a small stream which flows into Pagan Creek about a mile distant, on which may still be seen the evidences of the Old Court House bridge, and the old Court House wharf. My brother, J. F. Crocker, now of

Portsmouth, Va., remembers to have seen, in his youth, some of the timbers of the old bridge, and Emmet Allman, now living in Little Neck, remembers to have seen the same; and he remembers when the "old Dick Edwards" of my youth, used to ship wood from the lowest landing on this Neck only a few yards distant from the present county bridge, recently erected.

I have several times ridden across the small stream spoken of, and along the old Court-house road to and from Little Neck and beyond; and on the 4th of November, 1904, Watson Jones, (who lives on the old Glebe and Court-house tract) and I, rode across that stream early when the tide was coming in and was more than half flood, when the water came to the knees of our horses. At low tide you can easily ford it dry shod.

On the 9th of November, 1699, Edward Cobb conveyed to this Andrew Woodley two hundred and two acres of land in Little Neck, which were patented by Nicholas Cobb on the 21st day of February, 1663 (Deed Book 1, page 296).

On the 28th day of August, 1705, Edward Champeon sold to Andrew Woodley the balance of the nine hundred acres of the Nicholas Cobb patent of June 17th, 1664, which had not been sold, to John Manning, Thomas Davis, Thomas Took, Richard Woolien, and the Jones' place of two hundred acres above spoken of (Deed Book 1, p. 28).

On the 2nd day of May, 1713, Andrew Woodley and his son Thomas patented four hundred acres of land in the Upper Parish of Nansemond (Deed Book 10, p. 75).

On the 26th day of April, 1712, Andrew Woodley patented sixty acres of land in the same Parish (Deed Book—, p. 60).

On the 25th day of September, 1718, he, by his will, devised to his grandson John Copeland the land he bought of William Pope.

He probably owned other tracts of land but the imperfect condition of the early records of our County do not enable us to, easily, ascertain and identify them.

His mansion house was in Little Neck on "ye land bought

of Edward Champeon and ye land I bought of Edward Cobb both lying in one patent" (Will Sep. 25, 1718).

Little Neck lies between the two branches of the West branch of Fagan Creek which unite and flow into Pagan Creek, about a mile and a half by water above the town of Smithfield, where is now the new county bridge. One of these branches runs up to an old mill seat known at different times as Little Mill, and Blair's Mill on the road from Paul Jones' to the James Edward's formerly—now the Leroy Vellines tract, of land—and the other branch runs up to what has been recently known as Wilson's Mill, or Factory pond, formerly Woodley's mill.

Andrew Woodley was appointed by the County Court of Isle of Wight County as surveyor on the commission to run and mark the dividing line between Isle of Wight and Surry.

Andrew Woodley, the immigrant, died between September the 25th, 1718, the date of his will, and the 22nd of August, 1720, when it was probated by John Woodley his executor, on the oaths of Alexander Forbes, the rector of the Old Brick Church, and Thomas Wilson, who, with George Bell, were the witnesses to the will.

His will, besides his real estate and negroes, speaks of "his silver tankard that holds five pints" and "his surveying book and instruments" which he gives to his son Thomas, of "a silver cup that holds near a pint" that he gives to his daughter Mary Copeland, of his "sea books and instruments" which he gives to his grandson John Copeland, and of his "chest of linens and woollens lately come from England", landing, perhaps, at the lowest wharf on his land—the Dick Edwards landing before spoken of. His will demonstrates that he was a learned surveyor, and a skilled navigator—a great lover of the land and of the sea—a man of great intelligence, and of boundless activities. It is the tradition in the family that his wife was an heiress, and brought a great deal of gold and silver with her. Much of this my mother saw in her youth, and played with as a child, and out of the wreck of it she gave the writer a gold pin-cushion which he

still has, in the possession of his niece, Mrs John R. Larus, of Baltimore.

On June the 5th 1714, Andrew Woodley made a deed of gift to his son Thomas "of the 640 acres" known as Four Square which became his chief possession (Deed Book I, p. 297).

Thomas Woodley was a Justice of the Peace and a Captain in the county organization. He was appointed a vestryman of The Upper Parish (which then included the present county of Southampton) on the 15th of June, 1728, and he thus became a vestryman of the Old Bay Church near Smithfield which was within its boundaries. He was elected one of its wardens on the 16th of June, 1729. The Parish of Newport (Isle of Wight) was separated from the Parish of Notaway (Southampton) by the line of the Black Water in August, 1734, and Thomas Woodley then became a vestryman of the Old Brick Church as well as of the Old Bay Church and continued to be one until 1745. The Old Brick Church has a window to his memory. On the 24th day of April, 1754, he, by his will of that date, devised the six hundred and forty acre tract of land to his son John. He also gave him a lot in the town of Smithfield, number 43, four negroes, his still, worm and cap, the furniture in the hall, one large black-walnut looking-glass, his surveying instruments, one Fugal gun, one silver hilted sword, one bed and furniture, three leather chairs in the hall, and five silver spoons.

I cannot appropriately speak of his devises and bequests to his son Thomas, to his daughter Martha, and to his grandchildren Willis Wilson and Mary Millner, for I am only tracing the history of the ownership of Four Square.

This John Woodley, last mentioned, the son of Thomas, married the widow, Catherine Bryant Boykin, the mother of the then infant, Francis Boykin.

Under the management and control of this John Woodley the Four Square tract of land became enlarged, and this John Woodley by his will bearing date on the 3rd of February, 1791, devised it to his son Andrew Woodley with new bound-

aries, viz. "beginning at a corner tree Benjamin Chapman's, thence a line of marked trees to a corner tree near Constant Davis'; thence a line of marked trees to a corner tree of Richard Casey's; thence along a line of marked trees that William Bradley surveyed to a corner tree in the little pocosin that William Baldwin made, thence turning to the North running through the great pocosin by the gum pond, and when you get through the pocosin you leave following that line, then turning Northwardly running down the edge of the pocosin to the first station".

John Woodley gave two sons to the war of '76, Thomas and Henry. One died a prisoner of war in "the Black Hole" in Plymouth, and not in Calcutta, as has been generally believed, and the other was killed at the storming of Stony Point.

The fortune of John Woodley was seriously impaired by that war. When the British troops passed through the county, Andrew, who was then a youth, was sent with the cattle and horses into the depths of the pocosin, but the barrels of brandy that were secreted beneath the floor of the porch, and the family silver that was hidden beneath the growing corn in the fields, was by the treachery of some of the slaves, taken and carried away.

John Woodley gave to his son Samuel Woodley "the remaining part of his land which is not included in the bounds mentioned to his son Andrew Woodley." He lived where W. A. Edwards now lives, and was said to be the handsomest and best dressed man in the county.

This Major Andrew Woodley was born on the 27th day of April, 1769, married Elizabeth Hill Harrison Nov. 9th, 1797, and died Nov. 30th, 1829.

He was commissioned Captain in the 29th Regiment of Virginia Militia in 1798 and was made Major at a later day. He was on the bench of Magistrates in 1803 and was for a long number of years its presiding Justice. He was for a number of years the Sheriff of the county. He restored the fortunes of the family to what they had been in the heyday of his father, and extended them beyond his acquisitions. He

pulled down the old homestead in the field in the rear, where his grandfather lived, where he, and his father, and our mother, were born, and he built this house in 1807 as the bricks on the North chimney tell us.

My brother James F. Crocker—born in 1828 and now the head of the house—informs me "that it was Andrew Woodley who laid out the yards, built the spacious barns, smoke-houses, cabins for the servants and the many other outhouses." It was he who built his store and warehouses and shops of various industries that extended on the road from the forks of the road to the gate that led to the barn-yards; which our mother said, looked in her day, "like a busy village". All of our Woodley ancestors were brainy and enterprising men uniting culture with business—influential and useful in their days, but I think our grandfather, Andrew Woodley, excelled them all. We have no idea of how great a man he was in the business and public affairs of the County. His ability and will power dominated."

I, the writer, have often heard the late N. P. Young give many instances of this dominating influence.

He had eleven children, of whom my mother was the fourth, and her brother Thomas, was the seventh. The eleventh and youngest, was Richard Samuel Woodley after whom I was named.

The original Four Square tract of 640 acres in 1693 was greatly enlarged by the judicious management of John and of Andrew; and my mother has often told me the landed estate of her father extended from where Turner S. Reynolds now lives, on both sides of the road, to Bethel Church, a distance of two and a half miles. No one of the eleven children of the Andrew of 1829 could own the whole tract. Eleven hundred and sixty acres of that tract passed into the ownership of Dr. Thomas Woodley, the uncle of J. O. Thomas, and the brother of our mother. As a young practitioner of his profession he moved to Kingston, Lenoir county, North Carolina, and in 1853 or 4 he contracted to sell this eleven hundred and sixty acres to J. O. Thomas. The first deed of bargain and

sale bears date on the 20th day of June, 1854, and it recites that there was "an agreement and contract heretofore made"; that the said J. O. Thomas was a minor; that he was to take possession of the property on the 1st day of January, 1854; and that he "will not attain his majority or the age of twenty-one years until the 6th day of February, 1855".

This tract of four square property of four acres was bought by J. O. Thomas of his uncle Dr. Thomas Woodley when he was probably eighteen years of age: he had a deed for it twenty months and six days before he reached his majority, and he was in the actual possession of it thirteen months and six days before he was twenty-one years old.

He inherited his love of land from both the maternal and paternal sides of his house, and now, notwithstanding all the dire disasters of our late war, the eleven hundred and sixty acres of 1854 have grown into a compact body of three thousand continuous and contiguous acres in 1905. Through those acres in the large and small pocosins mentioned by John Woodley in his will of February 3rd, 1791, J. O. Thomas has, this fall, made numerous paths, and put up thirty-seven finger boards for our convenience and pleasure, so that we may easily follow the startled deer, or the skulking fox, from his place of fancied rest.

That three thousand acres added to the very large and valuable property of our host in the town of Smithfield and in the city of Newport News shows that he has been no laggard in the race of life and that he has not been excelled in useful activities by any ancestor on either side of his house.

On the 6th, of February, 1855, J. O. Thomas gave a fox-hunt at Four Square to celebrate his twenty-first birth-day.

From a paper read by Jno. W. Gray on the 6th of February, 1904, we are informed that there were present on that day (Feb. 6, 1855):

James M. Jordan, who died in 1869,

Dr. George H. Jordan, his son, who died in 1889,

Dr. W. P. Jordan, who died in 1865,

A. A. Jordan, his brother, who died in 1898 (both sons of W. P. Jordan, who became your brother-in-law in November, 1855),

Dr. Thomas J. Cheatham, who died in Chesterfield, his native County, in 1901,

John Gregory, his brother-in-law, who died in—
Dr. Chalmers was died in 1875

John D. Chalmers, his brother, who died in 1899,

R. H. Latimer, who died in 1901,

Berbin Jones, who died in 1875,

Simon Adkins, who died in 1873,

B. J. Gray (brother of J. W. Gray) who died in 1895,

Wm. M. Crocker, your nearest neighbor, who died in 1869, John P. Thomas, who died in 1872,

Abram Vellines, who died in 1885,

Edwin Bunkley, who died in 1887, and John W. Gray, himself, who died on the 15th day of September, 1904.

And thus, you, my brother, are left the sole survivor of that celebrated fox-hunt of fifty years ago, which continued for two or three days.

From that paper we learn That James M. Jordan—the "big Jim" of his day—was a staunch Democrat, a veteran politician, familiar with every political question that had stirred the hearts of men from the Convention of 1776 to the secession of 1861;

That Dr. George H. Jordan, his son, the good physician the bright Mason, the genial gentleman, took to good deeds and to politics by right of birth;

That Dr. Thomas J. Cheatham was as kind a man as ever drew the breath of life, and as fine a huntsman as ever rode to hounds;

That Dr. W. Pendleton Jordan, the brother of your wife, beneath a quiet demeanor and soft speech concealed all the lovable and sterling qualities of the scholar and the gentleman;

That Jack Thomas, Abram Vellines and Billy Crocker raced horses, fought chickens, played cards, rode to hounds and dispensed a generous hospitality their whole life long; and

That Ned Bunkley—good, dear old Ned—carried in his face and in his heart the radiance of the sun.

There were with you on your hunt of February 6th, 1904: John W. Gray, the brother of B. J. Gray, James R. Jordan, the son of Dr. George H. Jordan and the grandson of the "Big Jim" of 1855.

James M. H. Jordan, the brother of Dr. George H. Jordan. Thomas J. Chapman, the husband of Nina, the daughter of Wm. M. Crocker.

Al. Libby, the near neighbor of good old Ned Bunkley, his brightest pupil, and the holder of his mantle.

W. A. Edwards, Waverly Edwards, James Stringfield, L. L. Vellines, A. B. Stott, S. J. Whitley, Watson Jones, J. Waverly Thomas, R. S. Thomas and others. They and others are with you to-day.

From that paper, and otherwise, we have learned that it has been your yearly habit when the war, sickness and the weather did not prevent to give a fox-hunt at Four Square, and we are gathered here to-day, at your ancestral home, which since 1693 has not been out of your family, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of your majority, to congratulate you upon your long and useful life, and to wish you many years yet of health, happiness and prosperity.

You have been fond of sport, and you have been fond of work. You knew when to do both. And you have hunted as you have worked—with your whole heart when the day and hour came. A man, who, at your age can rise at five o'clock in the morning, feed his own horse, cook his own breakfast, be in the field with the first man, stay there with the longest, and be in the saddle till eleven o'clock at night, resting only for dinner, is of uncommon stamina. Fox-hunting has been to you only a diversion. It has been to you only what the violin was to Luther, the flute to Goldsmith, the organ to Milton, the mathematical problem to Brougham, the axe to Gladstone and the rod to Walton.

All men, of all times, have loved the chase. The wilder the game, the greater the excitement.

"The blood more sly to rouse the lion
Than to start the hare."

From the days of Nimrod, "the mighty hunter", and of Esau, "the cunning hunter, a man of the field," the men of all times and of all nations with good lungs and strong limbs have loved the chase of the lion, the tiger, the bear, the boar, the fox, the deer, the wild animal native to their country. Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian and Israelitish history is full of it. It is written in their books, and is pictured on the walls of their tombs. If my memory be correct, and my eyes did not deceive me, it is written on the walls of the Tombs of the kings of the buried city of Thebes.

The stone that smote the head of Goliath had gained its celerity and its accuracy in combats with the lion and the bear. Herod killed forty head of game—the bear, the wild ass and the deer—in one day. Homer and Virgil frequently describe the Grecian, and Roman love of the chase. Argos, the favorite hound of Ulysses, wagged his tail and dropped his ears in recognition of his master's return and in that moment of ecstasy, died of joy. "Alfred the Great was an active hunter and excelled in all branches of that noble art to which he applied with incessant labor and amazing success." William the Conqueror "loved the high game as if he were their father" and protected it with severe penalties. And when our ancestors crossed the ocean they brought the love of hunting with them. The horn I wear is said to have been worn by Major Andrew Woodley.

Fox-hunting has ever been the sport of kings, of princes, of those of aristocratic blood, and of gentlemanly leisure.

When Theseus was about to lead Hippolyta to the altar, the greatest entertainment he could devise for her was to bid one of his attendants

"Go, one of you, find out the forester:—
For now our observation is performed:
And since we have the van ward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the Western Valley; go.
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester."

We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hound and echo in conjunction."

To which Hippolita, with enthusiasm replied:

"I was with Hercules, and Cadmus, once
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta; never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord: such sweet thunder.

And Theseus, fond of the strain of his hounds, rejoined:

"My hounds are bred of Spartan kind
So flew'd so sanded: and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook'd kneed, and dew lap'd like Thessalian bulls
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd, nor cheer'd with horn
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly."

As is was in the woods near Athens, so it was in the forests
near Padua.

The Lord bade his huntsman to

"Couple Chowder with the deep mouth'd bitch (Merriman)
and asked him
Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
At the hedge corner in the coldest fault?"

To which the huntsman replied:

"Why Belman is as good a dog as he, my lord;
He cried upon it at the merest loss,
And twice to-day picked up the dullest scent.
Trust me, I take him for the better dog."

Lord:

Thou art a fool: if Echo were as fleet
I would esteem him worth a dozen such.
But sup them well, and look unto them all.
To-morrow I intend to hunt again."

Shakespeare was born in that beautiful county of Warwick.

It was in the domains of Sir Thomas Lucy and in the forest of Charlecote, that he enjoyed the delights of the chase. It was this, probably, that suggested to him the beautiful forests of Arden, named perhaps, after his mother, in which the banished Duke wandered, and on whose branches Orlando and Rosalind hung their verses of love. Full of the love of nature and of sport he died in enchanting Warwick in 1616, and from that day to this never a hunt has been given without a high debate: "Whether Silver or Belman is the better dog at the coldest fault".

Well do I remember the enthusiastic debates between Cheatham, Crocker, Gray and Thomas, whether Kitter, Music, Pluto or Mary were the better dog at "the dullest scent". The point always debated, was never settled; but Cox's Woezer and Sneezer generally led the pack, until Lufra of "Four Square" named after Ellen Douglas "playmate"——

"The swiftest hound of all North"

came upon the scene, and with movements more easy and graceful than Stringfield's Beulah, shot to the front, and became.

"A thing of beauty and a joy forever".

When on Loch Katrine I passed Ellen's Island, I could but think of the glories of Scott, of the romance of Trossachs, of Ellen's "playmate", and her beautiful Virginia namesake. I could hear again the voice of Lufra of Virginia fields and forests answering back to Lufra of Scottish glens and mountains. And when I sailed over its beautiful and placid waters I could but remember if it was at Loch Achray that James Fitz-James "the headmost" of the hundred horsemen, all solitary and alone, in the bitterness of his soul exclaimed,

"Woe worth the chase, woe worth the day,
That cost thy life, my gallant grey,"

yet it was Ellen's shallop and Ellen's oar that gave him rescue and rest in sympathetic response to his huntsman's horn.

And to-day, the debate waxes equally as warm between Libby, Jordan and Thomas, whether the best nose is possessed by Trimbush, Hark, or indomitable Little Jack.

However that may be, as between as noble dogs as ever put nose to the ground, when the trail is hot, and the game is up, perhaps the honors of fleetness will be awarded to the "Blue speckled Tramp" of Jordan, or Logan, of the writer. Swift, and close-packing behind these will come the deep mouth of Gamester and of Richmond, the flute-like note of Wise, the strange bass of King, the clear treble of peerless Ida and of Early and the maddening cry of all the others, excited to the highest pitch, making as "musical a discord" as "sweet thunder" as

"With hark and whoop and wild halloo"

We assail the fields and pierce the forests as

"Was ever halloo'd to or cheered with horn
In Crete, in Sparta, or in Thessaly"

And though, in this wild chase over the fields, and through the primeval forests where every man's whip and spur and voice is his own, our horses are not such as the Dauphin bestrode at Agincourt, whose "entrails were hairs" who "soared like a hawk," who "trotted the air," making "the earth sing as he touched it," "the basest horn of whose hoof was more musical than the pipe of Hermes," yet, they are certainly superior to the one that Petruchio rode for his crusty Kate; and the pink coat, the beaver hat, and the top-boot would fare badly in any effort in any all-day hunt to excel them. And when

"Our hounds shall make the welkin answer them,
And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow Earth,"

our generous host will be found in the midst of them, as much of a boy as he was in 1855—fifty years ago.

May he live long and prosper.

R. S. THOMAS,

February 6th 1905.

PRESENTATION OF SILVER SPURS.

At the conclusion of the paper read by R. S. Thomas, James R. Jordan in behalf of the fox-hunting friends of J. O. Thomas, presented him with a beautiful pair of sterling silver spurs—the handsomest that could be made by The Gorham Manufacturing Company—and in presenting them said:

MY HONORED FRIEND—

On the 6th day of February, 1855, assembled in your ancestral halls to commemorate with mirth and good cheer, the fact that you were free, white and twenty-one, was a noble band of gallant gentlemen and warm-hearted fox-hunters. None more worthy ever gathered around the festal board or rode to the cry of a well trained, sure-to-catch pack of hounds. Of that goodly company all save our honored host have laid aside the saddle and the horn. Their ears are deaf to the once thrilling music. Their voices are no longer heard in triumph: shouts as, some favorite dog forges to the front and leads across the open, while a dozen others strain every nerve and muscle to gain the coveted place. No longer do we hear their accents of exultation and pride, recounting the wonderful speed of "Juno", the bottom and nose of "Mary; of how "Wheeler" and "Sneezer", running like a couple of race-horses, lead the pack across Capt. Crocker's field. Of how "Jeff Davis", with bristles up and blood in his eye, never let up till the fox was dead. That was, indeed, a time of joy and royal good-fellowship. A half century has rolled by and wrought many changes. All of those genial friends of your bright, young manhood, have, one by one, crossed the river and joined the "great majority." You, my friend, stand forth as the giant oak, in bold relief, defying the storms of life and the ravages of time, the sole survivor of that auspicious day. Therefore, it is meet that we, the sons and grandsons of those men of by-gone days

who, for two days and nights made the walls of "Four Square" resound with mirth and revelry, should be here to-day with glad hearts and happy faces, to do honor to him, who, for three generations, has maintained the bloom of youth in his heart, cultivated good-fellowship and dispensed a generous hospitality.

As a token of our esteem and appreciation of those qualities which have given us a friend, ripe in years and honor, though young and buoyant in every emotion of the heart, I present you this pair of spurs; with the fervent hope that time may deal gently with you—that the fragrance of youth may continue to animate your heart, invigorate your body and enable you to ride long and hard for years to come in a glorious old Virginia fox-hunt.

J. R. JORDAN.

COMMENTS OF "THE TIMES-DISPATCH."

The Times-Dispatch sent Allen Potts, Esq., down as its special reporter of the hunt, and that excellent paper published in its Sunday edition of February 12th 1905, the above addresses with the following comments, by its special correspondent.

The most important event that has happened in the United States from a fox-hunter's point of view took place on last Monday at "Four Square," in Isle of Wight county, Va.

A half century of fox-hunting by the same master of hounds, with a pack made up of the descendants of the original pack, and with grandsons riding in the place of their grandfathers of fifty years before, marked an occasion without parallel in the annals of sport in this country. The very hunting horns belonged to days of long ago, having been the property of those sportsmen, long since dead, who rode and cheered the hounds in the days when the master of "Four Square" was but a boy, and the last century was in its middle age.

It was a privilege to witness the affection and esteem with which Mr. Thomas, the only surviving veteran of those bygone days, was treated by the sportsmen of to-day, and deservedly, for the squire of "Four Square" belongs to that excellent school that taught its pupils to

"Ride hard, shoot straight,
And, aye, the truth to speak."

On last Monday Mr. Julius Octavius Thomas, of "Four Square," celebrated not only his seventy-first birthday, but his fiftieth anniversary of master of his own pack of fox-hounds.

Fifty years before, on attaining his majority, he gave a great house party at his ancestral estate of "Four Square," when the days were spent in chasing the wily fox and the nights were all too short to allow a proper discussion of horses, hounds and the glories of the chase.

Year after year, on February the 6th, since the year 1855, have these reunions taken place, and one by one have those merry and honest sportsmen, of the original party been called to the "happy hunting grounds." Mr. Thomas, last of them all, called together his friends on last Monday and once again "Four Square" echoed with "the sound of the horn and the cry of the hound."

The day was cold and bleak, with falling sleet and flurries of snow, but no unfavorable conditions of weather could keep within doors the veteran fox-hunter and his friends on such an anniversary.

Early in the morning all Smithfield was awakened by the sound of horn and the deep-toned voice of hounds as the faithful few gathered to offer congratulations to Mr. Thomas.

Those who rode out with Mr. J. O. Thomas were his brother, Mr. R. S. Thomas; Mr. A. Libby, Mr. J. R. Jordan, Mr. Watson Jones, Mr. J. H. Holt, Mr. Allen Potts, of Richmond; Mr. E. Addlestein, Mr. Peyton Young and J. W. Thomas.

A pack of forty picked hounds was unkenelled and away went the party to the estate of Four Square, led by the veteran of seventy-one years, who rode as lightly and sounded his horn as bravely as did the youngest member of the band.

For six hours, through woods and field, over fences and across creeks and ditches, hounds led the field a merry pace, after a stout-hearted fox.

Scenting was poor, for the ground was all but frozen, and the hounds over-ran a score of times,

only to be harked back and sail away once more on the difficult trail.

Not until night had begun to fall did hounds run into the fox, and then in an impassable marsh where riders could not follow.

Back to "Four Square" rode the hunters, then to meet a host of friends who had gathered to partake of "the squire's" generous hospitality.

Great log fires burned and crackled in the fire-places, lighting up the fine old high-pitched rooms and warming the hearts of men who love sport for sport's sake, and who delight to tell the story of a famous run, or the exploits of a favorite hound.

Mr. "Dick" Thomas, younger brother of the host, read a most interesting paper on "Fox Hunting and Four Square," which was greatly enjoyed by all present. It is printed herewith.

In the dining-room a regular old-fashioned Virginia supper was served and the fine old Smithfield hams were not forgotten. Fox-hunting and "the squire's" health were drunk in old Virginia today, songs were sung, stories were told and finally hounds were brought in.

It was an evening long to be remembered, never to be forgot. The spirit and sport of other days were there linked with that old Virginia hospitality that warms the heart and blood and is ever dear to the hearts of sportsmen the wide world over.

Here's to the "squire of Four Square" and may he live a thousand years to hunt his hounds and entertain his friends!

ALLEN POTTS.